



Dear AAAM Colleagues,

The recent election has left many of us with a sadly familiar feeling of ambivalence toward the body politic. We are inextricably linked to it, yet constantly confounded by it. Presidential elections tend to unlock this sort of introspection as we try to square our individual values, morals, and beliefs with 'the choice' of the collective. Whether our chosen candidate wins or loses, elections lay bare the unassailable reality that America's citizenry views its past, its present, and most important- its future- in contrasting colors.

Amid this uncertainty however, African American museums and cultural institutions must continue their important work unpacking and making sense of the complex and intersecting issues of race, class, nationality, and personhood that framed this combative election. Because we are more important and more relevant than ever, I'm encouraging you to attend the Association of African American Museum's (AAAM) 2017 [conference](#) in Washington, D.C. aptly themed, "Presence, Power, Persistence: Advancing the History and Possibility of Museum Activism." I encourage you to attend, and consider submitting a [session proposal](#). This rich theme will allow us to tap the power of activism at the roots of our institutions, and share the ways that potent tool continues to inspire and enable our present efforts.

Moreover, I invite you to attend Museums Advocacy Day in Washington D.C. on February 27 & 28. AAAM member, and the DuSable Museum's President and CEO, [Perri Irmer](#), has enthusiastically agreed to share her thoughts on the necessity of committed advocacy during these uncertain political times. You can read her message [here](#).

The 2016 election results gave no shortage of opportunities for Americans to ponder the clang of their intentions (and voting ballots) against those of supposedly familiar neighbors, classmates, and colleagues. We wondered: Does our negotiation of the present diverge so diametrically that our preferred paths toward the future are nearly unrecognizable to one another? Would the bluster of the campaign trail translate into real-world policy? The immediate aftermath of an election is a time for astonishment and this type of wondering. It is fitting and appropriate, but now it is 2017, and action is required.

AAAM exists to support the institutions and the people undertaking this needed action. AAAM's members doggedly pursue accurate historical information, nurture creative expression, and foster difficult conversations that our community, and our nation, must have. Our museums and cultural centers provide safe spaces for mindful, civil, and vital exploration of our shared past and present. Unsettled moments like this are when our country needs us the most.

Indeed, as the poet and prophet James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced." Together, AAAM and its members, must continue walking that long arc of the moral universe that Dr. King assured us led to something better. Together we will.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Carter  
Board President, AAAM

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